



Meeting Challenges... Achieving Success

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**Gabriela Mello Honored as Central California
2009 Financial Services Champion of the Year
National Small Business Week May 17-23, 2009**

Fresno, CA – The Fresno District Office of the U. S. Small Business Administration has named Gabriela Mello as the 2009 Central California Financial Services Champion of the Year. Champion awards are presented by SBA as part of National Small Business Week celebrated nationally May 17-23, 2009.

The award presentation and reception for Gabriela Mello will be held at the Developing Hispanic Leaders Gala 2009 on Friday, May 8th beginning at 6:30 pm at the Fresno Convention Center. For additional information regarding the presentation ceremony please contact Melende Ward at (559) 487-5791, ext 143. For information regarding the Gala contact Anna Medina at the Fresno Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (559) 222-8705.

Mello was selected for this prestigious award because of her outstanding advocacy efforts and commitment to support entrepreneurs in business entrepreneurship and was nominated for the award by the Fresno Area, Kern County and Tulare Kings Hispanic Chambers of Commerce. Nominations for this award were solicited from throughout the 15-county Central California area.

Carlos G. Mendoza, District Director of the Fresno SBA Office, said, "Gabriela is a role model for all small business owners. Not only is she a tremendous asset as a mentor, but she is also a leader in our business community. We are honored to present Gabriela Mello with the Central California Financial Services Champion of the Year Award."

Upon hearing of her selection for the award, Gabriela said, "I'm honored by the recognition as the Financial Services Champion of the Year. I will continue to work hard to advocate for small businesses and to support entrepreneurs in our communities. I am so grateful to the SBA for helping our small business owners and for the partnership we have developed throughout the years."

Mello has an extensive background in business lending. Starting as a bank teller she worked her way up in the financial world to manage several Wells Fargo branches. She currently is the

Community Relations Officer for Citibank and covers the area from Central and South San Joaquin Valley through the Silicon Valley to promote programs for small business assistance.

As a long time advocate for small business Mello believes that education is the key to success. Financing is critical for the overall success of small business entrepreneurs. Mello takes the time and effort to see that each and every one of her clients is provided with opportunities to access the necessary capital in order to succeed. She has been instrumental in promoting financing literacy for small, emerging minority owned businesses and volunteers as a business instructor for many Hispanic Chamber of Commerce events and workshops throughout the State.

Mello volunteers her time and expertise to several organizations such as Junior Achievement, Kern Action Partnership Community Food Bank, Workforce Connection, Fresno Housing Authority and many more.

Dora Westerlund, President of the Fresno Area Hispanic Chamber of Commerce said, “Gabriela Mello is a great leader in our community; it is through her commitment and determination that businesses can achieve their goals”.

Financial Services Champion of the Year Award nominations are evaluated on the following criteria:

1. Outside of regular business duties, the amount and quality of assistance given small businesses to obtain financing.
2. Advocacy for changes in the financial services industry to assist small companies.
3. Encouragement of the flow of investment capital to small ventures.
4. Active support for legislative or regulatory action designed to help small firms.
5. Other significant contributions through the advocacy efforts of the financial services or accounting industries to advance small business interests.

This year marks the 46th annual proclamation by the President calling for the celebration of National Small Business Week. National Small Business Week recognizes outstanding small business owners for their personal achievements and contributions to the nation’s economy.

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